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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a pilot project at a Janesville (Wisconsin) elementary school, which uses a cooperative teaching approach to integrate all special education and at-risk students, including students with behavioral problems, into general education settings. Key program components include teaming, collaboration, cooperative learning, joint ownership for student integration, effective teaching practices, and development of teacher skills in adapting and modifying the curriculum to meet student needs. Program development is summarized, including development of a mission statement by a steering committee and development of a 4-year time task calendar to accomplish staff development needs and action plans identified by the steering committee. These included building needs assessment during the first year and extensive staff training on team member roles and responsibilities during the second year. Evaluation by staff after the second year of program implementation rated the program very positively. The third year saw continued inservice training and establishment of a core team to oversee team teaching efforts. The fourth year focused on expansion of the "Power of Positive Students" program, ongoing monitoring of the integrated program, and inservice training of new participants. The program has resulted in a stronger sense of community and a total school commitment to a philosophy of inclusion. (Contains 9 references.) (DB)

A quarterly publication for principals to assist in delivering quality service to all students—inclusive of those with disabilities

THE PRINCIPAL LETTERS:

PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

A Cooperative Publication. The Council of Administrators in Special Education & The National Academy on the Principalship in Special Education

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Vol. 10 Winter, 1993

Strategies for Inclusion of Behaviorally Challenging Students

Many administrators who believe in inclusive schools still struggle to find appropriate ways of working with behaviorally challenging individuals. Jon Cousins, principal of Jefferson Elementary School in Janesville, Wisconsin, and Jeanine Allen, currently the Special Education Supervisor for the district, worked collaboratively to implement a pilot program which would meet the needs of a diverse population, including those with behavioral problems, in an inclusive setting. Jeanine and Jon co-authored this letter hoping to share their experiences.

The first ten years of Jeanine's teaching career were in regular classrooms. She earned a B.A. in Elementary Education and later an M.S. in Special Education with emphasis in learning disabilities. She is currently working on her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Jon has been a principal at all levels for the past 26 years. He has a B.S. in Sociology, an M.A. in Administration and an Ed.S. in Administration and Supervision.

Both Jon and Jeanine are committed to providing quality education to all students in an inclusive setting. As they mention in this issue the pilot was only the beginning. They continue to refine and revise their methods of providing quality educational services to all students within the regular classroom.

Leonard C. Burrello
Pamela T. Wright

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Martin Luther King is widely known for the statement "I have a dream." This highly respected man had significant life experiences that led to the development of his dream—a plan for change and strategies to help achieve the goals.

The pilot project at Jefferson School which originated in 1987 was also a result of a dream. Both the Special Education Supervisor, Jeanine Allen, and I believed in this dream which was to design an educational environment in which all students could learn, build self-esteem and achieve success. A key motivator in the dream was the diversity of the population that was to be served by this elementary school. The majority of Jefferson Elementary's 375 K-5 students came from middle income, working class homes. In 1987, however, we were beginning to see an increase in students from lower income, multi-family residences. Also, the school's ethnic make-up was beginning to broaden considerably. We had students identified as learming disabled and we also served a population of students, coming from throughout the district, who had been identified as emotionally disabled. It was this population, in particular, that led us to seek alternatives to self-contained settings and to look at a more inclusive approach to the education of all students. The concept appeared to be a bit far-fetched at first. A major issue was how to serve diverse groups of students in the general education classroom without one of the groups losing a great deal. In this article, Jeanine and I will share with you the strategies that we employed to design an educational environment in which all students could achieve success.

BACKGROUND

My background includes being principal of an elementary school, a middle school and an assistant high school. In these experiences I was not able to understand how you could send a student out of the regular classroom to an ED or LD classroom and expect to have that child come back to the regular classroom "fixed." At the high school level some of the students I observed had been in the ED program for 8 or 9 years and they still could not function outside the classroom for emotionally disabled students.

There had to be a better way to serve some of these children. In other words, "business as usual" was not working.

The concept of changing the Jefferson School culture for me seems to have happened with one event. That is not really true but it seems that way. The following experience describes what happened to start us on the path to designing the pilot project. I was going through the building conducting walk-through visits. I went to a third grade classroom and observed two reading groups. They were the typical classroom groups—the Cardinals and the Blue Jays. It seemed that when the Blue Jays were up at the table with the teacher, the Cardinals had a difficult time staying on task.

I began to wonder how we could get an additional teacher into this classroom so the students would be encouraged to stay on track. It was at this time that I conceived the vision. If I could draw into this reading class other students who were working on the same skills, I could bring their teacher with them. My first thought was to approach the teacher of students identified as emotionally disabled. Would she be willing to bring her students down to join this class? She agreed, the regular classroom teacher agreed and soon there were two teachers in the classroom where I initially had one. As a result we were able to provide good role models for the special education students and we had a team of teachers that could exchange expertise.

This success led me to search for the elements that would enable us to serve all students in the general classroom setting in a similar way. I wanted to put teachers in

control of the educational setting by providing them with the inservice and training that would help them work in a team setting rather than in isolation.

Supervisor of Special Education

Jeanine's interest in special education grew from her first teaching position as an elementary classroom teacher during the early 1970's. At that time she worked with many "at risk" students but did not feel she was reaching them using the existing curriculum, nor did she feel she had the skills to meet their social/emotional needs. Jeanine enrolled in university classes and worked toward her degree in special education. She had a desire to find ways to reach students who had social/emotional problems as well as those who had difficulty learning.

After Jeanine received her degree in learning disabilities, her early work as an elementary learning disabilities teacher included working with children either one-on-one or in groups in a self-contained classroom. Jeanine had minimal contact with classroom teachers regarding student needs. Students would be successful in her setting but were not able to easily transfer skills to the regular classroom. She started to increase communication with teachers by meeting regularly to listen to their concerns regarding students who were mainstreamed. Over time, the staff and Jeanine developed and implemented adaptations for students with learning disabilities with hopes of increasing student success in the classroom. The teachers routinely met to review student progress and also worked together with parents for the children they shared.

Six years later, while a special education program support teacher, Jeanine worked with special education teachers to find ways for special education students to be more successful in the general education classroom environment. She read the limited research on service delivery options used in special education and reflected on those readings. Jeanine was impacted by information that supported developing a unified system approach to serving children in the classroom. She was influenced by those authors that spoke to incorporating strategies in the classroom to increase opportunities for all children to belong. From her personal experiences, Jeanine found that many special education children educated in the general classroom felt less isolated. They belonged to a group. Their self-esteem increased, and they had real friends. The curriculum was richer, more diverse, and the instructional time with teachers increased.

THE PILOT PROGRAM

In 1985 I began my third year as principal of Jefferson School and Jeanine was assigned to the building as a program support teacher. Jefferson School at that time served students with emotional disabilities, learning disabilities and speech/language disabilities as well as the general population. Special education teachers worked with small groups of students in self-contained classes. The classroom teacher was responsible for these students for part of the day and the special education teacher was responsible for the remainder of the day. Problems regarding student programs were solved individually by the staff. The student problem solving team functioned on an expert system. School staff brought concerns regarding a student to experts—ie. the special education teacher, psychologist, social worker, counselor—who were expected to provide the solution. Ownership went to the assigned expert to solve the problem. Solutions often did not fit the environment and were limited in their scope.

Jeanine and I began discussions, read material and attended several workshops that resulted in significant changes in how we did things around Jefferson School. Jeanine and I initially generated possibilities for change and formulated a steering

committee, representative of general and special education staff, support staff, the counselor, reading specialist, IMC coordinator and parents to explore ideas and to oversee the project. The role of the steering committee as it assisted the building in the process of change was to:

* develop a mission statement
* generate plans and activities to include in the pilot project
* act as a sounding board to approve project activities
* establish timelines and procedures
* through participatory management, act as a vehicle to design programs to meet student needs

Six months later the steering committee developed the mission for what came to be our pilot program. In this process they learned to take risks and openly discuss ideas for change. The question that the committee addressed was, "What needs to happen in order for special education and/or at-risk students to be successfully integrated into general education settings?"

The following is the mission statement that the team developed and that the full building staff approved:

> The Jefferson School environment will attempt to meet the needs of all students through a cooperative teaching effort. We will plan to provide the best instructional approach by combining the skills of all teachers. This will be done by integrating special education and at-risk students with regular education students. This concept will provide positive role models which will help all students to reach their maximum potential.

The model that we developed to support this mission was revised several times over the next four years. Central elements to the model did not change but how or where the elements were placed on the model did change. Components included teaming, collaboration, cooperative learning, joint ownership for student integration, effective teaching practices and development of teacher skills in adapting and modifying the curriculum to meet student needs.

We developed a time task calendar for each of the next four years to accomplish staff development needs, action plans and activities identified by the steering committee. The time calendar helped implement the elements that were necessary, provided accountability and gave the building a sense of accomplishment. Numerous meetings were held with the steering committee as well as with the full building staff and parents in order to share information and to revise needed activities. Selected teachers and parents attended workshops and reacted to presentations from speakers that included Laurence Lieberman, Madeline Hunter, Fred West, Lorna Idol, Jeanne Bauwens, Norman Kunc, Dorothy Lipsky and Alan Gartner during that time period. Each time the staff brought back ideas and excitement on ways to increase student success at Jefferson School.

Activities during that first year, based on the building needs assessment, provided general and special education teachers preliminary information on team teaching, collaborative consultation, and strategies to adapt and modify the curriculum. Teams were identified and parents were informed of the pilot effort. Many staff members were excited and highly involved in the project. Others were not. As principal, I extended the opportunity for the teacher to transfer. It was clear that Jefferson School was becoming a place which fostered partnerships and promoted activities to serve special education students in general classroom settings utilizing a collaborative team effort. If this was not a part of the belief system of the individual teacher, Jefferson School would no longer be able to provide that teacher job satisfaction. Strong positive

feedback from teachers at the end of that first year supported the continuation and expansion of the pilot project.

During the second year activities focused on extensive staff training in general and special education team roles and responsibilities, and importantly on collaborative consultation as the vehicle for joint problem solving. Over a two day period during that winter the entire building staff received collaborative consultation training from their own staff members.

Utilizing building staff as trainers during the next two years was important to the acceptance and success of collaboration at Jefferson School. Their efforts effected a staff attitude change from "this is your child" to "this child belongs to all of us and we will work together to solve problems." Students participated in "Kids on the Block" puppet programs and teachers received inservice and follow-up on how to manage aggressive student behavior. Some teachers met to further address issues surrounding additional curriculum adaptations for special needs students in general education settings. Several staff members also attended workshops on cooperative learning. The PTA organization was kept apprised of pilot efforts. Their support was extremely important to the implementation of the pilot.

At the end of the second year the staff formally evaluated the pilot effort. The following includes staff feedback and comments:

* 89% of the staff rated training in Collaborative Consultation as above average to outstanding
* 89% the staff rated involvement in collaboration meetings as above average to outstanding
* 90% of the staff involved in general and special education teaching arrangements rated teaching teams as above average to outstanding
* 77% of the staff rated joint ownership of student problems as reducing teacher anxiety as above average to outstanding

Teacher Comments:

* "I'm delighted to be working at a school that addresses these very important problems. The students can only benefit, and that's what education is all about."
* "I hope this truly can be implemented. I know it works, but the time factor is so critical when implementing a group meeting of which this has to be."
* "What a wonderful way to accept and accommodate the individual in everyone."

By the end of the second year the initial role of the steering committee diminished. The structure for change was now in place. It became the responsibility of Jeanine and myself to secure resources and provide inservice as identified in the year time task calendar to implement the pilot.

In the third year, new school staff were provided staff development regarding the pilot effort. Continued training in collaborative consultation occurred in the building as well as during inservice workshops to increase new teacher knowledge of strategies for behavioral management. Staff implemented the Power of Positive Students (POPS) program. This program resulted in a significant change in increasing student self-esteem. As this program took hold, students were saying "I am responsible for my own behavior." During that school year a general and special education core team was established. They drafted a core team document to oversee building practices and procedures for general and special education team teaching. With the assistance of a consultant the team identified building practices for the establishment of teams, placement of students into teams, practices for the delivery of instruction in the team, strategies for teacher planning time and strategies for evaluating teaming. In order to

facilitate this, the building schedule was revised to provide common planning time between general and special education teachers. This effort was further enhanced by a monthly planning session for each team. Teacher substitutes were hired for both general and special education staff for up to 1-1/2 hours during the day. Substitute teachers rotated between classrooms so teams could meet. Staff feedback that year was completed through a system analysis of integration efforts, collaborative consultation and teaming.

During the fourth year the emphasis in the pilot shifted to expansion of the POPS program. Components previously identified in the pilot effort continued. The general and special education building core team met on a monthly basis to oversee teaming practices and to evaluate the teaming process. Again new teachers were provided inservice on components of the pilot effort.

Last year all pilot components previously identified again continued. As the staff gained experience the POPS program received a wider building emphasis and new staff were trained in all building initiatives. The general and special education core team became the vital building committee to oversee all practices and procedures for team teaching.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

As we evaluated the pilot effort that transpired over the past five years we found the experience to be exciting and challenging with slow, steady and at times very painful change. Continued communication of the vision for the pilot as well as endless energy, interest, commitment, and support by the teachers made it happen. Minimal financial assistance was available and teachers often worked for "meatballs, crackers and cheese." New staff who transferred into the building or were hired during the course of the pilot were teachers who identified themselves as having an openness to change and who believed that all children could be successful through a unified system approach. Teacher beliefs about education that included teamwork were essential in hiring. Staff who remained at Jefferson School since the beginning of the project changed their paradigm on how they believed all children could be educated. The resources of special education staff as well as support from paraprofessional staff were brought to the classroom. All building staff are now responsible for all children. There now exists at Jefferson School, a strong sense of community, collegiality, friendship and professionalism. This is truly a school family.

Our project resulted in a significant change at Jefferson School. At this time we are evaluating all aspects of the model. New visions include working toward an outcome based school where children are evaluated on an individual basis. We are looking at a non-graded concept to ensure that the organizational structure will be flexible enough to meet student needs. We are investigating authentic assessment as one component for this next step. In addition, staff who work at Jefferson School will continue to receive ongoing feedback on the project so they can share in the satisfaction and pride that comes as a result of their professional, dedicated efforts.

Inclusion is the accepted way of doing business at Jefferson Elementary School. Teachers state they will not go back to the isolation of the past. Jeanine and I both concur.

Resources

If you would like more information on inclusion of behaviorally challenging students, collaborative consultation, the Kids on the Block series, or Power of Positive Students program, the following resources may be helpful.

Areilo, B. (1989). Kids on the Block Series. Toronto: Twenty-first Century Books.

Biklen, D. (1985). Achieving the Complete School: Strategies for Effective Mainstreaming. New York: Teachers College Press.

Brown, D. Wayne, M. Blackburn, J. & Powell, C. (1979). Consultation Strategy for Improving Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Friend, M. (1992). Interactions: Collaboration Skills for Professionals. New York: Longman.

Fuchs, D. (1991). Toward a Responsible Reintegration of Behaviorally Disordered Students. Behavioral Disorders, 16 (2) 133-47.

Idol L. (1986). Collaborative Consultation. Rockville, Maryland. Aspen Publishers.

Janney, R.E., & Meyer, L.H. (1990). A Consultation Model to Support Integrated Educational Services for Students with Severe Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 15, (3), 186-99.

Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback W., & Stainback, S. (1992). Restructuring for Caring and Effective Education. Baltimore: Paul H. Bookes Publishing Co.

William, M. (1985). The Power of Positive Students. New York: Morrow.

Mainstreaming has many antecedents. Treatment of and provision for disabled youngsters has gone through many metamorphoses: from neglect, to isolation in residential setting, to special classes, and now to progressive inclusion. History reflects a number of changes in beneficence of society, to the present thrust of aggressive assertion of rights...in an effort to obtain the rights of children for full participation in the mainstream of American society. (Rocha and Sanford, "Mainstreaming: Democracy in Action")

THE

PRINCIPAL LETTERS:

PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Edited by: Leonard C. Burrello, Ed.D. and Pamela Wright

Dear Colleagues:

It's time to renew your subscription to *The Principal Letters* for the 1992-93 school year. As you know, we're a quarterly newsletter, written by principals who are working toward delivering quality education to all students, including those with disabilities. We hope to again offer stimulating and relevant information from those who know you the best. . . your colleagues. We look forward to having you with us in the year to come.

Fall 1992
A Principal's Overview

The fall newsletter will examine numerous aspects of Special Education and how it relates to your role as Principal. Teacher relationships, parent relationships, behavior management, instructional strategies, legal issues and resources are a few of the topics which will be addressed.

Winter 1992
Strategies for Inclusion of Behaviorally Challenging Students

A Wisconsin school principal and his staff will provide interesting insights into including behaviorally challenging students in schools. Some exciting and innovative strategies have proven successful and will be described in this issue.

Spring 1993
Facing the Issues

This letter will focus on two key issues which principals face when working toward meeting the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, in their own schools. Funding management and administrative relations are the issues that will be examined from a principal's and director's point of view.

Summer 1993
Alternative Assessment Strategies

Discovering an appropriate means of evaluating student outcomes continues to be a challenge for teachers and administrators. Alternative Assessment Strategies that can be used with all children are being implemented in many schools. This issue will describe some of these strategies and will examine their viability in the schools today.

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